

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following criteria are proposed as a guide for evaluating strategies, recommended by the public and by the consultant, based on the transportation gaps identified in this project. The criteria are intended to be flexible, so that differences among different communities can be taken into account. The order of presentation does not correspond to order of importance—no one category is considered more important than the others.

These criteria may also be used to evaluate projects resulting from the strategies arrived at through this process, and the criteria below use the terms “strategy” and “project” interchangeably. In evaluating projects, specific funding requirements for particular sources are also considered. Thus projects meeting these requirements might be ranked more highly than those that do not.

There are four groups of evaluation criteria: financial, implementation, transportation benefit, and community criteria.

Financial Criteria

Cost per beneficiary: The number of beneficiaries is compared to the cost of a program. Even though a program’s total cost is low, if it reaches very few people it might still have a high cost per beneficiary. This would not necessarily eliminate a project from consideration if it ranked highly on other criteria including those listed under “Transportation Benefits Criteria” and “Community Criteria.” Similarly, even though a program’s total cost is high, if it reaches many people it might still have a low cost per beneficiary.

Funding availability and sustainability: To the degree possible, strategies and related projects should have stable sources of funding to cover match requirements. In the case of pilot, demonstration, or capital projects, there should be a reasonable likelihood of continued funding for operations and maintenance, if any. It is recognized that continued funding can never be guaranteed, as it is subject to budget processes, as well as decisions and priorities of funders.

Leveraging resources: It is desirable for strategies and projects to help tap into other funding sources, especially new sources not previously available. Displacing existing funding is discouraged.

Implementation Criteria

Implementation time-frame: Strategies that will produce results quickly and are sustainable are preferred. Sustainability would include overall capacity to administer the project, including administrative and technical capacity to handle grant funding. Projects with long-term payoffs should have some form of measurable accomplishments in the short run.

Phasing: Can the improvement be implemented in phases? If so, and if the early phases can produce measurable, beneficial results, then the project would score higher. If the project is complex and long-term and does not lend itself to phasing, the evaluator can weigh the importance of long-term results against the lack of short-term benefits.

Coordination: Strategies that involve coordination, for example multiple organizations working together to address a need, may be desirable if the barriers to coordination can be effectively addressed.

Transportation Benefits Criteria

Number of problems and trip types addressed: Strategies that address multiple problems and serve multiple customer groups and trip purposes are preferred.

Number of beneficiaries: In general, improvements that benefit many people are preferred to those that benefit few. However, the needs of relatively small groups might be considered particularly critical based on criteria under the heading “Community” (below).

Unserviced needs: Projects are preferred that address gaps left by other services rather than duplicating, overlapping with, or competing with other services. Note that the relative importance of various needs is a matter for local priorities as addressed under “Community” (below).

Measurable benefits: As much as possible, there should be ways to measure how a strategy is benefiting target populations (older adults, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals with low incomes), whether in terms of number of people served, number of trips provided, improved measures of service quality, etc.

Community Criteria

Community support: Community support may take the form of formal endorsement by organizations and individuals, support by elected officials or governing bodies, a potential project sponsor (“champion”) with staff or vehicles, and connections to adopted plans to carry out the strategy. Input from community outreach and stakeholder interviews will be taken into account.

Community Acceptance: While a strategy may look good “on paper”, there may be more subtle reasons – for example, cultural, practical, or financial – that would result in it not being successful if implemented. The strategy must be acceptable to the target population. That is, will the target population actually use this service being offered?

Acute needs: The importance of needs will normally be reflected in community support, but also in priority designation in locally-adopted plans or policies. Acute needs may include needs of small groups who have been left unserved by other programs due to expense or other difficulties.

Unserviced groups: Does the project address transportation gaps for members of the target population? Identifiable groups that are not able to use existing services may include people who face language and cultural barriers.